

Gospel People and Gospel Power

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Preacher: Rev James Maciver

[0 : 00] So, we're going to begin our worship now. We're singing, firstly, this evening in Psalm 98. Psalm number 98, that's from Sing Psalms, page 129, the tune is Glasgow.

And we're singing verses 1 to 4. O sing a new song to the Lord, for wonders he has done. His right hand and his holy arm the victory have won.

The Lord declared his saving work and made it to be known to all the nations of the world. His righteousness has shown his steadfast love and faithfulness. He has remembered well the covenant he made with them, the house of Israel.

Some of the greatest words in the Bible, theologically, words relating to our salvation, are found in the book of Psalms. And you'll find them here in this psalm, for example, words like steadfast love, faithfulness, covenant, righteousness.

And so on. And so we sing these verses, Psalm 98. O sing a new song to the Lord. O sing a new song to the Lord, for wonders he has done.

[1 : 25] His right hand and his holy arm the victory have won.

The Lord declared his saving work and made it to be known.

To all the nations of the world, his righteousness is shown.

He has remembered well that he has remembered something that he has known. Our faithfulness of Genesis 6, Psalm 91, And so um, mo■li grace, and your heart has shown up. Our kingdom is righteousness, and your joy is■■ And for grace, and your word can be no zero.

Amen, in angels and your honor what we do.■ he has learned Yenny and your honor it to be known. Praise God, we are partners in the end. With your Lord, we are faithful to Him and will see the Lord.

[2 : 39] Amen. Amen.

Amen. Let's now call upon the Lord in prayer.

Let's join together in prayer. Lord, we ask that you would unite our hearts as we worship you. Unite our hearts together and unite all our faculties individually so that we may be able to worship you as you deserve to be worshipped in spirit and truth.

And, O Lord, we ask that you would work within us this evening to stir up our souls so that we may be able, as we have been singing, to give praise and thanks to you in recognition of all that you are and all that you have done and all that you continue to do and all that you promise yet to do for your people.

Lord, we thank you, O Lord, tonight that we have this privilege, that you have gathered us together. We have not come of our own accord. We would not have the desire to come if you had not placed this desire in our hearts.

[5 : 05] And we thank you, Lord, as we come, that we can come not in a mere formal outward fashion alone, but that we can come with that intense desire in our heart to meet with God.

And we pray that you would create this in us. We ask tonight, O Lord, that you would stimulate our minds so that we may give attention once again to what you have revealed to us in your Word.

We thank you as we come before you that we can indeed ourselves reflect upon all that you have done and all that you have continued to be to us as a people, as a congregation, and even as individuals as well.

Lord, we thank you tonight for your faithfulness. We bless you for your loving kindness, which is better than life. We thank you for the great victory that you have won. You have achieved that victory, Lord, through your death on the cross and your resurrection from the dead and your exaltation to glory.

And through your intercession at God's right hand, we give thanks, O Lord, that your people are remembered and presented always before you. We pray, O Lord, tonight for the blessing of your Spirit to open up our minds and to open up your Word for us.

[6 : 16] We thank you that you are the Lord of the Scriptures, that you are the God who caused them to be written from the beginning, that you are the one who moved those who gave us these books of the Bible so that in their own time you moved them to set down those things that were according to your will, that would be of benefit to your people down through the ages and on through to the end of the world.

We thank you tonight, O Lord, for the gospel, for the way in which in your Word we find that message of salvation in Christ. And we thank you for the way in which that gospel has been proclaimed by your people and is still being proclaimed throughout the world.

We pray, Lord, that you would help us to have confidence in the gospel, enable us to see that we don't need to adjust it, that we don't need to add to it or take from it as we find it in its entirety, as Christ himself is the substance of it.

We pray that you would enable us, Lord, to hold on to the way in which the Lord himself is presented to us in your Word. And enable us, we pray, to be confident that this is indeed the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes, of whatever background we may be.

We pray tonight, O Lord, that you would be amongst us in your saving work. We thank you that we come before you expectantly and come before you confident, O Lord, that you will apply your Word in a saving way to our hearts, all who have come, O Lord, to be gathered here this evening.

[7 : 51] And we ask that this may be so in our experience, that it would please you, O Lord, to give to us a renewed sense of your own presence and your provision for us in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And we ask that you would draw our minds once again to those things which are so central and so substantial in the message of the Gospel, to the cross itself and to the Lord's resurrection from the dead, to the way in which we come to be made right with God and set before you in righteousness in his name and in union with him.

And, Lord, we pray that we may be constrained to carry forth this great message into the world of our day, a world that we know as has been the case down through the centuries and yet is no better off in our day than before in its need of having salvation proclaimed, its need of being delivered from the thralldom of darkness and of sin and of ungodliness.

And we ask, O God, in our day that we may see many coming to be delivered through the power of the Gospel from the grip of sin and being transferred from the realm of Satan into the kingdom of your own beloved Son.

We pray that tonight, Lord, there be many conversions to Christ. We ask that here itself, many who may be here and are not yet saved will come to know this very evening as the time of their great change, as the moment of that transition from darkness to light into the liberty with which Christ is able to make us free.

[9 : 32] Bless us, we pray, as a congregation of your people. Bless us in all our activities along with our worship services. Lord, our God, we offer them to you and pray that you would bless them to ourselves and to others that we seek to benefit by them.

We ask us this week unfolds, O Lord, by your will, that we may have your blessing for the midweek meetings, for those things that we anticipate happening in various days of the week.

We pray that you would bless the fundraising activities for Giga, as we have for other causes as well. We ask that you would bless the way towards the breakfast next Lord's Day.

We pray, Lord, that many will come and come into contact with the gospel, with the message of Christ, crucified and risen from the dead. We pray that you would give us, Lord, to be concerned to pass that message to them with love and with concern and with patience and with tact.

And enable us to be thankful, O Lord, that we have this opportunity. And we pray that you would bless this to us as a people and to those that will come and partake of themselves of what is provided for them.

[10 : 48] We ask, O Lord, to your blessing for those who are anticipating baptism for their children next Lord's Day. We pray for both of these families. We thank you for their part in the congregation.

We pray for them as parents. We pray for the children as well. We ask, O Lord, that they, along with those recently baptized, will come more and more into the understanding of and the commitment to the gospel that we find set out in these things for us.

We pray tonight, Lord, for those of our number who are unwell. Bless, we pray, those who are suffering from COVID infection. We pray for them and ask your blessing for them.

We pray for those suffering from other illnesses as well and ask especially for any who are seriously ill and for those who may be approaching the very border of death and of eternity.

O Lord, we pray for that preparation. We ask that you would give them to be ready for that moment as we seek for us all so that we may be ushered into that life of bliss in heaven and not be taken away from you.

[11 : 58] We ask your blessing too for those, Lord, who mourn the passing of loved ones in recent days, in recent weeks and months, as well as for those who can reach back in their memories and for whom their evening is still very much a live issue.

Lord, we ask that all who miss loved ones, whose hearts still ache for them and who have had to adjust so much in life to their absence, be pleased, Lord, to draw near to them even tonight through the gospel and through your word.

Minister comfort, consolation, encouragement to them. We ask your blessing for all who have gone forth with the gospel to different parts of the world. We ask that your blessing will be with those who serve in God is Good Africa, those Kenny John and those who help him.

We pray that the fundraising may be a further success to supplement the funds needed for the work. We ask, O Lord, too, for Muriel in Cambodia.

We thank you for her. We pray for her at this time. We thank you for the way that we are able, through technology available to us, to have times of fellowship with her, times when we can hear of updates from her and meet together in prayer with her.

[13 : 14] Lord, we pray for her and ask that you would continue to bless her and give her all that she seeks from you, Lord, to continue to serve you. And we pray for her as she anticipates her future and ask that you would guide her into that future, whatever it may hold for her.

We pray for those tonight, Lord, who are in hospital, those who are in care homes, those who are no longer able to look after themselves without help.

We thank you for the help available and we pray for them. We pray for their families. We ask that you would make us thankful, O Lord, for the provision that you make for us in these times of need. Remember, too, we pray those who reach out to those with various problems in life. We pray for those who have various addictions and those who are seeking to help them and give them support. We ask, Lord, for the work of the shed, for the work of Road to Recovery, for the work of Safe Families. We commend all of these to you, O Lord. We pray that they may be of much benefit to those who seek to avail themselves of their help.

[14 : 19] And we ask that you would continue to encourage those who are involved in these works. And so, Lord, we ask that you would bless us and bless us, too, as a nation at this time when we find that element of turmoil even amongst those, O Lord, who lead us in government.

Be pleased, we pray, O God, to establish righteousness in our midst and in our leadership. We long for the day, Lord, when those over us will come to confess themselves as your people, confess your laws as their laws, and your word as that word which they relish and is foundational to them.

Lord, we pray that you would bless us at this time and deliver us from the very obvious ungodliness that is so evident a part of our society at this time.

Receive our thanks now. Cleanse us from all our sin. Do for us more than we are able to ask or think. For Jesus' sake. Amen. Let's praise the Lord again.

This time we're singing in Psalm 115. This time in the Scottish Psalter, Psalm 115. And at verse 10 to a tune St. Andrew.

[15 : 32] It's on page 395. O Aaron's house, trust in the Lord, their help and shield is he. Ye that fear God, trust in the Lord, their help and shield he'll be.

So from verse 10 down to the end of the psalm, Psalm 115. Psalm 115. O Aaron's house, trust in the Lord, their help and shield is he.

He that fear God, trust in the Lord, their help and shield he'll be.

The Lord, the Lord, the Lord, have a mind for thee, and he will bless us still.

He will the hearts of Israel bless. Blessed, their children's house, he will.

[17 : 07] Who's warm and great, that fear the Lord, he will then surely bless.

The Lord will do you, you and your seed, they won't, and won't increase.

O blessed are ye of the Lord, whom in the earth of heaven.

The heavenly heavens are lost, but ye are to men's sons again.
The heavenly heavens are new to silence, O God's praise to no reward.
[18 : 37] Lord, but hence for thee, all ever well.

Blessed God, praise ye the Lord. Now let's turn to read God's word as we find that this evening in Paul's letter to the Romans.

Romans, and we're reading from chapter one from the beginning down as far as verse 17. The letter of Paul to the Romans, chapter one and verses one to 17.

Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures concerning his son, who was descended from David according to the flesh, and was declared to be the son of God in power according to the spirit of holiness, by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ, our Lord, through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations, including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.

To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints, grace to you and peace from God, our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

[20 : 13] First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed in all the world. For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing, I mention you always in my prayers, asking that somehow by God's will, I may now at last succeed in coming to you.

For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you, that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine.

I want you to know, brothers, that I have often intended to come to you, but thus far have been prevented, in order that I may reap some harvest among you, as well as among the rest of the Gentiles.

I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also, who are in Rome.

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it, the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith, as it is written, the righteous shall live by faith.

[21 : 35] And so on, and we pray again that God will bless to us this portion of his word. Before we turn to look at these verses, let's sing once again, and we're singing in Psalm 97.

Again, it's in the Scottish Psalter, on page 360, Psalm 97, verses 8 to 12. And we're singing to a tune, Argyle.

Zion did hear, and joyful was, glad Judah's daughters were. They much rejoiced, O Lord, because thy judgments did appear. For thou, O Lord, art high above all things on earth that are.

Above all other gods, thou art exalted very far. Hate ill all ye that love the Lord. His saint souls keepeth he, and from the hands of wicked men, he sets them safe and free.

For all those that be righteous, sown is a joyful light, and gladness sown is for all those that are in heart upright. Ye righteous in the Lord, rejoice, express your thankfulness, when ye into your memory to call his holiness.

[22 : 46] These verses, Zion did hear, and joyful was. Amen. Amen. Amen. Zion did hear, and joyful was, that Judah's daughters were.

They must rejoice, O Lord, because thy judgments did appear.

For thou, O Lord, art high above, all things on earth that are.

Above all other gods, the world exalted very far.

He did not know the Lord, and of the Lord his sins so keepeth he, and from the hands of wicked men, he sets them safe and free.

[24 : 40] For all those that be righteous, for all those that be righteous, so is a joyful light, and gladness soon is for all those that are in heart upright.

He is for all those that are in heart upright. He is for all those that are in heart upright.

He is for all those that are in heart upright. He is for all those that are in heart upright.

He is for all those that are in heart upright.

Please turn with me now to Romans chapter 1. Romans chapter 1, and we're going to look at verses 8 to 17.

[26 : 14] First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed in all the world. For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I mention you always in my prayers, asking that somehow by God's will I may now at last succeed in coming to you, and so on.

What would you say is the main topic of the epistle to the Romans? You might reply to that by saying, well, surely it's to do with justification by faith in Christ, and that's certainly very much one of the main topics, one of the main themes and topics dealt with, one of the main truths that you find dealt with throughout the epistle to the Romans.

You might say, well, it's also the place of the Jewish people in the covenant arrangement of God, such as you find in chapters 9 to 11 of Romans.

You might say that it's Jesus Christ himself, because obviously he appears in all of these passages in some way or another, or at least they relate to him and his person and his work.

But you could also say, very tellingly, that the main topic of the letter to the Romans is the gospel, that it's the gospel that Paul is setting out in this great letter that has so many theological high points throughout it.

[27 : 51] And he makes it obvious at the beginning that this really is his main topic. He's called to be an apostle set apart for the gospel of God. And he goes on to speak about this gospel in such a way that shows Christ as the substance of it, that his concern is to declare the gospel, the preaching of Christ, and that he is not ashamed, verse 16 of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.

And as you can see in verses 1 to 6, as I've said, the substance of the gospel immediately is set out as the person of Jesus Christ himself. The gospel is not so much an account of certain things which happened in history.

The gospel, the good news, which of course the word gospel means, is about a person. It's not a theory. It's not a philosophy. It's not something that sits alongside other world viewpoints or points of view.

It is Jesus Christ, his death, his resurrection from the dead, his present position at God's right hand, and his coming at the end of the world as the judge of all the earth.

The gospel is really about Jesus. He is its substance. It's all to do with him, what God has done and will do and is doing in Christ and through Christ.

[29 : 21] And verses 8 to 17, we could say, is really about gospel people and gospel power.

Gospel people because he mentions in verses 8 to 17 how, first of all, certain people are associated with the gospel, that is, those who follow the Lord, those who are witnesses to God, witnesses to Christ in the sense of being saved, the saved people of God.

And you also have in verses 16 to 17 an emphasis on the power of the gospel following on from what he says about the people, the gospel people.

And these are the two things I want to just briefly seek to set before you this evening. gospel people and gospel power. And you see in verse 8 there, in terms of gospel people, he says, first, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you because your faith is proclaimed in all the world.

What a remarkable statement that itself is. Just think about what that's saying for a moment. Here is the basis or a basis or one of the reasons why Paul is giving thanks for these Christians in Rome, why he's giving thanks not only for them, but what they are known as, because they are known as Christians.

Your faith is proclaimed in all the world. Now think about that. Rome is the place. Rome is the center of the universe in Paul's day.

[30 : 55] It's the capital of the massive Roman Empire, of the influential Roman Empire. Rome is the grandest city in the world of the time. Rome really has all the kudos, all the importance, everything associated as it followed on from the Greek Empire before that, how the Roman Empire is now in Paul's day really the influence in the world, the city that is central to all that Rome is and all that the Roman Empire believes and sets itself out to be.

But it's also, of course, as it is the capital of the Roman Empire, it's the capital of paganism, the capital of that outlook that so many people in Paul's day had as they looked to pagan gods, as they looked to philosophies associated with pagan gods, gods that were themselves worshipped in idolatry.

And this is the capital of paganism, of idolatry, though there are many other places in Paul's world. As you know from the other epistles, Corinth and Ephesus and Thessalonica, for example, all centers of paganism in Athens.

But Paul is, let's say, here thinking of Rome as the very centerpiece of that paganism throughout the empire. And it's really that way, in that way, it's the capital, you might say, of all that is opposed to the gospel.

It's the capital of the philosophy or the worldview in pagan philosophy that stands against Christ and against his gospel. And yet, and yet, God has his people in Rome.

[32 : 44] God has established a church in Rome. Paul is writing to this church in Rome. Paul is writing to these Roman Christians set in the capital city of a pagan empire that are followers of Christ, whose allegiance is not primarily to Caesar, to the emperor, but to Christ the King.

And how that should give us encouragement tonight in our situation, in our world as well. Because if Paul is saying that God, as he has, has planted a church in Rome, where can he not plant a church?

There isn't a place on earth tonight that is outwith the capability of God to establish a people for himself there. The most vehemently opposed dictatorship on earth tonight is still vulnerable to the gospel.

And God can break through at any time, whether it's in North Korea or in Russia, wherever it is. Remember, as you find these circumstances brought before us in Ukraine, the massive onslaught against him from the Russian forces, remember that God is at work.

Remember that that may very well be an instrument of God, not just in Ukraine, but in Russia itself, to bring people to really think about what is it we're standing for?

[34 : 11] What is it that our nation stands for? What is it that our president stands for? And pray that God will actually use what's happening even there to be a means of further establishing his own cause and his people and his church in these circumstances.

Remember, as we saw in Philippians and in chapter 4, where Paul was sending greetings at the end of chapter 4 of Philippians, where he sent greetings especially to those that he was writing to in Philippi, those of Caesar's household greet you.

We saw earlier in the early part of the letter to the Philippians how Paul spoke about those who were of Caesar's household, those who actually belonged as servants in the very palace of Caesar. They had become Christians. They had been nurtured through other Christians. They had a relationship with Jesus Christ, their King, their Savior. Putin, whatever he's able to do and able to resist, cannot resist the Holy Spirit.

He cannot dictate which way God will work. He cannot himself, nor anyone like him, prevent the gospel being the power of God unto salvation.

[35 : 35] He cannot prevent God's people in Russia being nurtured by the Holy Spirit. He cannot prevent conversions to Christ. It is God who has charge over the universe.

Encourage yourself tonight. Let's encourage ourselves as a congregation, as we're facing the might of the world around us, as we're facing so much that is opposed to the gospel, so much that really challenges the gospel at its very core, its very foundation.

Take encouragement from the fact that nothing is beyond God. God can do what he's done in Rome, in Stornoway, throughout Lewis, throughout our country, wherever in the world.

So here he is saying, there are witnesses to Christ here in Rome. And he regards them, Paul regards them as his spiritual family.

See what he's saying here in verse 13. He speaks there, brothers, which of course means sisters as well. This is just the normal language of the time. But male and female Christians brought under that description.

[36 : 45] I want you to know, brothers, that I've often intended to come and see you, although I've been hindered that so far, have been prevented. He wants to bring encouragement to them.

Verses 9 and 10, you find the same thing there. For God is my witness, that without ceasing I mention you always in my prayers, asking that some of God's will, by God's will I may succeed in coming to you.

His heart is with these Roman Christians. He's identified with them. He wants to actually go and see them. He wants to benefit from their company, and he wants to present them with some things which will benefit them in the gospel.

You see how he puts it here, verses 11 to 13. But you notice in verse 12 as well how he puts it. That is that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine.

You see, he's saying this works in two directions. I want to come and see you. This is my urgent concern and desire, though I haven't been able to do it so far.

[37 : 55] This is still on my mind. This is what I want to do. And I want to meet with you, and I want to actually come and strengthen you by some spiritual gift, some way by which I can minister to you in fellowship that which will strengthen you.

I mean, it's obviously some teaching, some further nurturing and things of the faith. No, he's never met them. He's never seen them in person, as far as we know.

And yet here he is saying, you are my brothers. You are my family. You are my spiritual family. We belong together as the people of God. And I long to see you.

And I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift. But you see, there's the other side to it. That is that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine.

There, you see, is the interaction between Paul the apostle, Paul the great preacher of the gospel, Paul whose concern it is to have this gospel spread further throughout the world, Paul whose concern it is to impart some spiritual gift and help to these Christians in Rome.

[39 : 03] But he's saying, it works to my advantage as well, so that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith.

What's going on here this evening? What is it that's actually happening as the gospel is being preached by me, a minister of the gospel, called by God to be a minister of the gospel to you, this congregation at this time?

What is it that's happening when you as a congregation have come of yourselves desiringly and willingly under the preaching of the gospel to listen to what God has laid on my heart to set out? It's mutual encouragement. Because as we desire to be a means of encouragement to you under the gospel, so we benefit from that, from having you here, from seeing you here, from interacting with you here or elsewhere.

That's the way the two-directional fellowship of God's people works under the gospel. That's why it's a great encouragement for me to see you here tonight, for me to see increasingly people coming to the gospel.

[40 : 14] I'm not saying that out of any sense of personal worth, out of any sort of pride in the matter at all. It's simply that this really is exactly as Paul is putting it here.

There is a mutual encouragement. And I hope for you, I'm sure by God's blessing it is for you, a means of encouragement under the preaching of the gospel as it is for us who preach the gospel, to be encouraged by you in return.

That's really, in essence, what being bonded together really is about. It's not just for the benefit of one side. It's two-way.

It's two-way. And it's very difficult when it's not working the way it should, where there are places where people are just lax about coming to the gospel, where people are also seeking to preach the gospel but not faithful to the gospel.

It's a mutual encouragement that ought always to be at the heart of gospel, fellowship, gospel meetings, gospel worship.

[41 : 23] And you know how it is when very often you go and visit somebody, particularly somebody who's housebound or in hospital, and though that's, of course, been curtailed for such a long time with COVID and the after effects of COVID.

But you know yourselves what it's like. You go and visit somebody who doesn't see many people from one day to the next, and you go and you try and be an encouragement to them. That's what you want to do.

But how often do we come back from these places, these visits, and say, well, I got more out of that than they did. I received such a blessing from that.

Whatever they received, this is what it was like for me. And that's why we encourage one another in the way in which we encourage coming together and interacting with each other, as Paul says it here, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine.

I thought he says, I am under obligation in verse 14. Here is the gospel people, a gospel people who are witnesses to Jesus in Rome, a gospel people who, along with Paul, come to be encouraged mutually by their interaction with each other.

[42 : 36] But thirdly, here's a gospel people where there's an obligation, he says. I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish.

So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome. Now, what does he mean by being under obligation? And what does he mean by obligation to both Greeks and barbarians? Well, being under obligation really is just what it says. God has placed in his heart such a sense of obligation. It's not something that anyone has forced on him, and he's not really saying that God himself has forced this on him.

He has come willingly through the call of God, as he says at the beginning, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God. Something in which Paul is so willingly engaged as we ought to be as well.

He's not forced into it. It's not something of a constraint that's come about through some kind of legalistic way of approaching things. It's simply that Paul has his heart's desire set on preaching the gospel and wanting to go to Rome to do the same.

[43 : 46] And he's under obligation, he says, both to Greeks and to barbarians. And by that he means, certainly this comes into it at least, even if there's maybe some more to it than that.

But I think he means both the cultured, that's the Greeks, of course, who can speak of themselves as being the very cultured people of the world, even in the Roman Empire time, and barbarians, people who can't say that of themselves, those who you might say are uncivilized.

But this is what Paul is saying. It's both to the Greeks and to the barbarians, to the cultured and to the uncivilized. I am under obligation to both. I am under obligation to preach the gospel to both. In other words, Paul is saying, it doesn't matter what kind of people I'm facing. My concern is to preach the gospel to them. My concern is to deliver the message of Christ to them, Christ the Savior, Christ crucified, Christ risen from the dead.

What a great lesson and challenge there is in that for ourselves. We don't actually go out, this is not just applicable to preachers of the gospel or those that are preaching in gospels, it's applicable to a congregation of people like yourselves.

[44 : 59] Because tonight, we are under obligation, as we are called by God to be his church, his believing people in this world, we're under obligation to actually deliver that gospel to the world in which we live.

And it doesn't matter what kind of people surround us and how many differences there may be between one person and another, whether they're very cultured people or maybe even uncivilized people.

The burden is the same. The concern is the same. The obligation is the same. Martin Lloyd-Jones, famous preacher in London, at one time was, you remember, he was actually a medical doctor, a very famous Harley Street doctor, but he gave that up, or God had called him from that to become a preacher of the gospel, firstly in Wales, but then in London for most of his ministry.

And he tells about how on one occasion he was asked by a large group of medical students, knowing his background, of course, to come and speak to them, to deliver a talk to them.

And they expected him to speak on something really philosophical, something very grand in the way of an intellectual treatise of some kind. And when he got to the place, the hall was full of people, and he says, I simply delivered the basic message of the gospel.

[46 : 26] Their need of Christ, their being sinners, their need of salvation, and that Christ was the Savior. And of course, that didn't please many of those who were actually there to hear the doctor come and speak to them.

They expected something very different to that plain, ordinary, you might say, gospel message. But he brought them through, thinking about Christ and the reason Christ came into the world.

But then he, towards the end, he said to them that Christ would be coming again as the judge of the world, that there was such a thing as eternity and judgment to come.

And because they were medical students, this is the language he used. He said, that will not be a post-mortem, but a living examination. Not a post-mortem, what you do on a dead body, but a living examination.

An examination of the living in eternity in the judgment of God. That's what it is for ourselves. You know, there are many people in the world tonight, and you have a great advantage over them, knowing that what they believe is not in fact true.

[47 : 40] They believe that there is nothing but this world, nothing but this life, nothing beyond death, nothing at all to confront or to worry about beyond death itself. And as Martin Lloyd-Jones put it, the Bible is telling us, yes, there will be an examination.

Yes, there will be a judgment. Yes, there will be a sifting out of our life, everything that we have done. God in his judgment. Jesus on the judgment throne. And as Martin Lloyd-Jones put it, it's going to be a living examination.

You will not be unconscious, nor will I, or dead when that is being done. But a living examination. That is why the gospel is so crucial, because it's the gospel that brings us the message of salvation to deliver us as that judgment is in prospect from the wrath of God, which Paul goes on to speak about, of course, from verse 18 all the way through the next couple of chapters especially. So there it is for us tonight, the gospel people mentioned in these verses. And tonight that's what he's calling us to be, or he's calling you to be, witnesses to the gospel, witnesses to Christ, witnesses to salvation in Christ.

To be a spiritual family, to relate to one another in which we are brothers and sisters in the Lord. And for that, of course, we need to be in Christ to begin with.

[49 : 10] You need to have Jesus for yourself before you can relate meaningfully to others who say, that Jesus is their Lord too. Well, there's one of the great questions.

Again, it comes up, of course, and it ought to come up before us every time. Am I saved? Do I belong to the spiritual family, even though I belong to a gospel congregation?

Am I a witness to Christ and to the gospel of Christ? Do I really find in myself that same spirit that the apostle had being under obligation to bring the gospel to the world of my day?

Do you sense that obligation in yourself? Because there are many professing Christians that don't, or don't to any great extent. Well, tonight, all of us here should seek to be ourselves under obligation, that God would place us under obligation and a sense of obligation increasingly to bring that gospel message of salvation to such a needy world around us.

But he goes on to speak about gospel power. I need to be fairly short with this. There's a gospel power. Verse 16, for he says, as he says, I'm eager to preach the gospel to you also in Rome, for I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation for everyone, to everyone who believes.

[50 : 44] I think about Rome again, its history, its culture, its place in the world of Paul's day, the capital of the empire, all that we've said before. And how does the gospel compare with that?

How would the people generally in Rome or in Paul's day throughout the empire have compared what he was bringing in the message of the gospel to the great and cultured world that they themselves had inhabited all these centuries?

Well, they would regard the gospel as really an inferior intruder into that world of cultured Greek and Roman philosophy. And it's still the case.

And it will always be the case because the gospel challenges the world's view of itself and the world's view of God. And the gospel challenges the closing of your heart against salvation in Christ. It will always be regarded by the world, by the ungodly, by the powers that resist the gospel as an inferior intruder into the matter.

[51 : 52] And indeed, in our own island, you'll find people to this day of the view that the gospel coming to the islands was really a tragedy, that it destroyed the culture of the time.

And of course, the culture of the time was paganism, our own island version of paganism. But that's what happens.

I'm not saying the gospel necessarily destroys any particular culture. And we shouldn't think in those terms wherever we bring the gospel. It doesn't mean that every aspect of that culture needs to be wiped out, needs to be destroyed.

But the gospel still needs to be faithfully set forth. But salvation in Christ is still the central core element of what is proclaimed.

And the crucial question really for us, whatever generation we belong to, whatever civilization we belong to, the crucial question is a matter of righteousness. Because we can be the most cultured people in the world according to worldly standard and still be unrighteous and still be ungodly in God's eyes.

[53 : 05] That's really the crucial issue. How can I be right with God? How can I be righteous, accounted righteous by God? I may have everything that the world itself regards as necessary for

progress and so on, but this is my big problem, that I am unrighteous, that I am a lost sinner, that I am ungodly, that I need what I have in Christ for my life to be turned around.

That's what Paul is meaning by not being ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God unto salvation. And you know, one of the big problems that we actually face in trying to present the gospel to the world of our day is that not only does that world out there not know much about the gospel, but it doesn't care.

It doesn't really care at all about the gospel or knowing what the gospel is or anything to do with Jesus or with God. And if there is a shred of care, it's really in terms of getting rid of it.

That's why we need the gospel and need to have confidence in the gospel. He says here, it is the power of God unto salvation. And he's talking here about the gospel itself, the message of Christ crucified and salvation in him, the good news.

It is itself the power of God unto salvation. In other words, it's what God uses to bring people to know him and having brought them to know him, to feed them, to nurture them spiritually.

[54 : 44] That's why we must maintain confidence in the gospel. You see, here is Paul facing all of these centuries-long philosophies that have been part of human behavior and human thinking all the way back into time.

And here he is with the Roman Empire now in charge. Nothing of that has changed. One empire building on the next. This massive, massive edifice of thinking and of philosophy and of teaching that's now being confronted by what paganism itself sees as the inferior intruder of the gospel. Wouldn't you think Paul would be somewhat embarrassed to bring into that world of Roman thinking following Greek thinking before it? Wouldn't you think that Paul would be somewhat embarrassed to actually bring a message that simply said, here is the hope of mankind in a man crucified on the cross at Calvary, risen from the dead, ascended to glory, coming to judge the world at the last day. That's far from it, Paul is saying. I am not ashamed of the gospel. Why is he not ashamed of it? Because small as it may seem, insignificant as it may seem, compared to the might of Rome, it is the power of God unto salvation.

Paul is not saying the gospel itself is about the power of God. He doesn't say it's telling us about the power of God. It is the power of God.

[56 : 22] It's the instrument that God uses to bring people to know him, to bend in willing obedience to him, to come to be his servants, to be saved.

And it is unto salvation. You know yourselves what salvation means. It means the very deliverance from that which came from our fall in Adam, from our lostness, our sinfulness.

There's a powerful reversal of all that happened there. It's deliverance from sin, from the guilt of sin, into righteousness and the hope of heaven.

Because God never delivers from one thing without delivering you into something alternative.

Delivering from sin, from death, from hell, from all that's associated with our fallenness.

Salvation is deliverance from all that and unto or into the life that is in Christ, the life that heaven will be for his people.

[57 : 39] And that's, friends, why the gospel is crucial. Not only is the gospel crucial, but it's crucial to maintain the gospel as God gave it to us. You see, that's why Paul was so annoyed with the Galatians.

Because they had changed the terms to some extent, at least, to a serious extent, they had changed the terms of what God had given them in the gospel. What Paul himself had delivered by his preaching of the gospel.

Because they had altered how a person comes to be right with God. Yes, Jesus was mentioned. So also was good works. Your own ability, your own righteousness, what you're able to do yourself.

You add that to what's in Jesus. Paul is saying, that's not the gospel. Because the gospel is for those who can say of themselves and to whom God has brought the conviction, I have no hope in myself.

And I can never have hope in myself or through myself as long as I'm a sinner unsaved and I will be a sinner unsaved until Christ saves me.

[58 : 44] And that's why he's saying, I'm not ashamed of the gospel. But it's the power of God unto salvation. Friends, we are under obligation to bring the gospel to the world of the day.

But we are also under obligation to keep this gospel as God delivered it to us. I don't need to tell you, I've mentioned it often enough anyway, that throughout our own nation and throughout the

world, you'll find many churches, many groups who have altered the message of the gospel to suit the culture of the day.

who are seeking to import and have imported many of the things which the world sees as essential, whether it's in human relationships or other matters that the world thinks, now that's how we have to live and how we have to think.

And so, sadly, some churches, some groups have actually departed from the gospel in its purity. We must never do that.

However much we may feel the challenge of the world, however small we may feel ourselves to be against that great philosophy out there of worldliness that has built on millennia of unbelief and ungodliness, it is still the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes.

[60 : 11] Don't ever forget that. Don't ever let the devil or the world take you away from that conviction. What we long to see is not a new form of the gospel, but the power of God through the gospel changing people's lives because this gospel is the power of God unto salvation.

And it is also to everyone who believes. He's not content just to say this gospel is the power of God for salvation, but it's the power of God to everyone who believes, whether Greek or Jew or Gentile or whoever.

It is to everyone who believes. And there's again the crucial issue in terms of our personal relationship to this salvation and to this God, the importance of faith in Christ.

for you to have your trust in Him, to have Him as foundational to your life and hope. You must be able to say, and I must be able to say, I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to me, a believer, to me, a Christian, to me, a saved sinner.

Can you say that tonight of yourself? Under this gospel, have you not yet come to close in with Christ in the offer of salvation that He brings to you in the gospel?

[61 : 53] Do you know Him for yourself rather than just know Him in an outward or formal fashion in the teaching of the gospel? Friend, if you're here tonight, and not yet saved, and I say it's wonderful to see all of these children here tonight as well.

But this is really for your children as well as for all these adults so important in your life, even as a young child, to be able to say, I'm not ashamed of this message of salvation because it's all about Jesus and Jesus is mine and I am His.

That is what Paul is saying. And friends, we don't have an awful lot of time available to us. You remember how Jesus spoke to those in John chapter 12 that were listening to and then coming towards the end of His public ministry in terms of John's presentation of it where as the light of the world, He had proclaimed Himself to be the light of the world and saying, whoever believes in Me believes not in Me but in Him who sent Me.

Whoever sees Me sees Him who sent Me. I have come into the world as light so that whoever believes in Me may not remain in darkness. If anyone hears My words and does not keep them, I do not judge him for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world.

And this is what He went on to say, while you have the light, believe in the light that you may be the children of light. And that's what He said earlier in the chapter.

[63 : 35] While you have the light, believe in the light that you may become the children, the sons of light. You know, in the wintertime when you walk out of church, the outside light's still on and the doors are closed.

And you might ask, well, why is the light still on? The answer, we will because it's on a timer. And the timer in its own time that's been set will switch off the light and then you've got darkness.

The gospel light is on a timer. As far as I'm concerned, as far as you're concerned. Whatever it is for you tonight, that timer is going to kick in one of these times.

And the light will go out. And Christ will no longer be available if you haven't come to receive Him in this life.

please, please, don't let the light go out on your life without Jesus Christ as your Savior.

[64 : 51] Let's pray. Lord, our God, we thank you tonight that you are the light of the world who has come into this world that we might not abide in darkness but have the light of life.

we thank you for your people. We thank you for the interaction we have with your own family in this world in the way that we are able mutually to encourage one another.

We thank you too for the power of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, for the power of God that works through the gospel. and we pray, O Lord, that that will be increasingly our experience in this

congregation and beyond.

That we may know indeed with our own conviction that this indeed is the gospel that is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes. Hear us now, we pray, for Jesus' sake.

Amen. We're going to conclude our worship this evening singing in Psalm 108. Psalm 108, this is in the Sing Psalms version on page 146.

[66 : 01] Singing verses 1 to 5, the tune is High for it all. O Lord God, my heart is steadfast and with all my soul I'll sing. Harp and lyre I will awaken and my song the dawn will bring.

Psalm 108, verses 1 to 5. O Lord God, my heart is steadfast and with all my soul I'll sing. Harp and lyre I will awaken and my soul the dawn will ring.

Lord, my God among the nations I will ever give you praise In the midst of all the heroes I will sing of you always For your steadfast love is boundless Greater than the heavens high And your faithfulness And your faithfulness towards us Reaches even to the sky

Far above the highest heavens Be exalted, O my God And through all the earth around us Let your glory spread our God If you allow me to get to the main door please after the benediction Thank you.

[68 : 32] Now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ The love of God the Father And the communion of the Holy Spirit Be with you now and evermore Amen